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SUBJECT: EMBASSY SANAA 'A COMMEMORATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF
SEPTEMBER 17 ATTACK

11. SUMMARY: On September 16, post held a ceremony commemorating the first anniversary of the September 17, 2008 attack on the Embassy compound. Visiting DAS Janet Sanderson conveyed regards from State Department colleagues in Washington and commended Embassy personnel for their perseverance in the face of danger and hardship. Ambassador Seche delivered remarks recalling the day of the attack, honoring the sacrifices of the fallen, and voicing the renewed commitment of the Embassy community to its mission in Yemen. The ceremony also included the dedication of two plaques honoring the security personnel killed during the attack and the bravery of all Embassy personnel. END SUMMARY.

12. On September 16, post held a ceremony commemorating the first anniversary of the September 17, 2008 attack on the Embassy compound. The ceremony was held in front of the Chancery entrance and was attended by American and locally employed staff, as well as the family of Mukhtar Ahmad Ahmad al-Faqih, the Local Guard Force (LGF) employee who was killed during the attack.

13. The ceremony began with remarks by visiting DAS for Maghreb and Gulf Affairs Janet Sanderson. She conveyed to the Embassy staff "the regards and best wishes of your colleagues in Washington ... (who) salute your courage, your determination, and your endurance in the face of much difficulty to continue to do the important work before you. That you are willing to stand up to terrorism, that you continue to work hard and selflessly for better relations between our two peoples, despite grave challenges and great loss, is a tribute to your personal and professional commitment and your respect for those who have served here before."

14. Ambassador Seche then delivered remarks, recalling a day one year ago "that started out pretty much like any other: we awoke to a blue sky, another sleepy Ramadan morning. We came to work. Everything changed at 9:13 that morning, however." He recounted the 26-minute assault, the smoke and gunfire that enveloped the Embassy compound, and in the aftermath of the attack "being stunned by the extent of the damage, and the number of people who had died." He honored those who fell defending the compound that day. LGF employee Faqih "was the first to die that morning, as he refused to let the terrorists' vehicle onto the compound. Six members of the Central Security Force were gunned down in the minutes that followed. We gather to remember, and to show our respect for these individuals, who made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf."

15. Ambassador Seche then spoke to the perseverance of the Embassy community and the importance of its mission. "We gather today to re-commit ourselves to our mission here in Yemen. This is a difficult environment in which to work. The challenges are many and they can be daunting ... This may frustrate us, but it should not diminish our resolve. In fact, it is the enormity of the challenges in this country that demands the very best from each of us." He reflected that the mission's success will be measured "by the difference our efforts make in the lives of the people of

this country ... In our success lies the greatest tribute that we can pay to those who died here one year ago, and the most resounding rejection of the message of intolerance and violence carried by those responsible for their murders."

¶16. Ambassador Seche then dedicated a plaque to be placed inside the Chancery, which reads in English and Arabic:
"Dedicated to the brave men and women of U.S. Embassy Sana'a. Your bravery and sacrifice on September 17, 2008 when the Embassy compound came under attack from armed assailants and vehicle-borne explosive devices will not be forgotten. Your continued perseverance and dedication to America's security and the cause of freedom are an inspiration to colleagues around the world."

¶17. Following the observation of a minute of silence, Ambassador Seche, joined by Mukhtar al-Faqih's father, led a procession outside the Embassy to place flowers on a plaque remembering those who were killed. The plaque, to be placed near the pedestrian entrance to the Embassy where it will be visible to all visitors, reads in English and Arabic:
"In lasting tribute to those brave individuals who made the ultimate sacrifice on September 17, 2008, defending the American Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen against a terrorist attack.
Mukhtar Ahmad Ahmad al-Faqih - U.S. Embassy LGF
Yahya Thabet Ahmed Mohammed al-Samwai - CSO
Zayd Yahya al-Samawi - CSO
Nu'man Ahmad al-Hamili - CSO
Isma'il Ali al-Anisi - CSO
Mansur Hassan al-Hamudi - CSO
Ali Saleh Murshed al-Jawfi - CSO"
With the dedication of the second plaque, the ceremony concluded.

COMMENT

¶18. One year after the attack, the Embassy community continues to mourn the loss of Mukhtar al-Faih and the others who died defending the compound. The attack remains a painful memory, and the security environment is as daunting as ever. But through this ceremony, the Embassy community drew strength from its shared sacrifices, and from the faith that, in its mission to improve the lives of the people of Yemen, it will triumph over the ideology of hatred that spawned the attack.
END COMMENT.
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